

(Washington, DC)— Today Congresswoman Gwen Moore released the following statement:

“When I read about the latest murder or act of senseless violence, I am deeply distressed and my heart goes out to those who are feeling the pain of loss personally. I know that it could have just as easily been my granddaughter or son, as my family lives in one of the areas where violence continues to pervade.

“With each new report of a crime too heinous for any of us to understand, our community’s reaction is one of being up-in-arms, shocked and angered. We think, ‘What now?’ The problem is that we should be asking that question in advance of the crime. Preventing violence should be an everyday effort—it’s got to be ongoing.

“Milwaukee has one of the largest populations of young people in the country. The demographics tell us that we need to address this emerging population. The most important strategy of raising children is being there and paying attention. The sad fact is that so often determining which young kids are going to end up either in trouble or causing trouble is knowable. I’m willing to wager that somewhere along the line, an adult—had they been paying attention—could have noticed that the 16-year-old girl who orchestrated a gang rape on an 11-year-old was missing a sense of empathy and decency from the set of social skills she learned along the way.

“They say ‘It takes a village,’ and I believe that’s more than an empty statement. But where is that village? Where was that adult—be it a parent, relative, teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker—who can tell that a young person is headed down the wrong path? Maybe the parent is incarcerated. Maybe the teacher is busy dealing with an over-crowded classroom. Maybe the school can’t afford a psychologist on staff. Where are the resources? Without resources we can’t provide social workers in schools, or after-school programs, or summer school, or vocational training.

“We’ve got to commit ourselves to the young people in Milwaukee. We’ve got to educate them, engage them, and teach them to be decent and caring citizens. We’ve got to do this every day, with the realization that our commitment never ends.”

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